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News Release

ICE ARRESTS 582 VIOLENT GANG MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES IN TWO-WEEK NATIONWIDE ENFORCEMENT OPERATION

El Paso special agents arrest 3 Barrio Aztecas, bringing to more than 1,057 arrests under ICE's ongoing "Community Shield" anti-gang initiative

El Paso, TX – Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, and Marcy Forman, Director of Investigations for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced the arrest of 582 street gang members and associates during a two-week, nationwide enforcement action under the auspices of "Operation Community Shield," ICE's ongoing national anti-gang initiative.

From July 16 to July 28, ICE offices throughout the United States teamed up with federal, state and local law enforcement partners to target members of more than 54 violent street gangs, including Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Sureños, 18th Street Gang, Latin Kings, Vatos Locos, Mexican Mafia, La Raza gang, Border Brothers, Brown Pride, Norteno, Florencia 13, Tiny Rascal, Asian Boyz, Jamaican Posse, and numerous other violent street gangs.

The 582 gang members and associates, including 11 gang leaders, arrested in this two-week operation are accused of various criminal violations and/or administrative immigration violations. In total, 76 of these individuals have been charged with criminal violations that range from illegally re-entering the United States after deportation; to being alien in possession of a firearm; to possession of fraudulent documents or various state crimes.

In the El Paso area, the following Barrio Azteca gang members have been arrested:

- On July 20 ICE special agents arrested Hugo Luevano-Gomez, 32, an admitted Barrio Azteca gang member. Luevano-Gomez, 100 block of Lazy Knee in Clint, Texas, has a criminal record that includes arrests for Inflict Corporal Injury on Spouse, Fleeing a Police Officer, Possession of a Stolen Vehicle, Domestic Assault, Criminal Mischief, Telephone Abuse, Possession of Stolen Property and Retail Theft. Luevano-Gomez, who was previously deported, has been placed in removal proceedings and remains detained at the El Paso Processing Center.

- On July 19, ICE special agents arrested Fernando Castañeda-Quiroz, 24, 600 block of Park Street, alleged Barrio Azteca gang member. Castañeda-Quiroz has a prior criminal history that includes a Possession of Marijuana conviction, and an Unlawful Carry Weapon arrest. Castañeda-Quiroz is a legal permanent resident. However, because of his criminal conviction, he has been placed in removal proceedings and remains detained at the El Paso Processing Center.
- On July 19, ICE special agents arrested Adrian Cazares-Zavala, 28, 100 block of N. Resler, alleged Barrio Azteca gang member. Cazares-Zavala's prior criminal history includes an Assault Causing Bodily Injury arrest, Evading Arrest conviction, two Criminal Mischief convictions, Criminal Trespass arrest, Evading Arrest Using a Vehicle conviction, DWI conviction, and Property Theft conviction. Cazares-Zavala is a legal permanent resident. However, his felony convictions make him deportable. He has been placed in removal proceedings and remains detained at the El Paso Processing Center.

“Operation Community Shield goes a long way in contributing to the safety of our community,” said Keith J. Perniciaro, who heads the El Paso ICE Office of Investigations. “Targeting the most violent and dangerous street gangs is a top priority for ICE, which will continue to seek out, arrest and remove these serious criminal offenders.”

El Paso ICE special agents were assisted in making these arrests by officers with ICE-Detention and Removal Operations, El Paso Police Department, El Paso Sheriff's Department, U.S. Marshal's Service, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, DEA, Texas Department of Public Safety, Social Security Administration and the FBI.

Nationally, the vast majority of the gang members and associates, 506, were arrested on administrative immigration charges, ranging from being a convicted felon foreign national subject to removal; to entering the country without inspection; to violating the terms of a visa. Of these individuals, 261 are foreign nationals who have prior criminal convictions, rendering them subject to removal from the United States.

“Street gangs in America have grown and expanded their influence to an alarming level, marked by increased violence and criminal activity,” said Secretary Chertoff. “These gangs pose a severe threat to public safety and this growth must not go unchallenged. We will continue to coordinate our efforts closely with our law enforcement partners nationally and use our collective authorities to help rid our communities of this malignancy.”

“We have a message for violent street gang members in America: ‘stopping your violence and criminal activities is high on ICE's list of priorities,’” said Forman. “We're backing up our resolve with results. In the last two weeks we've arrested 11 of your gang leaders, 490 members and 81 associates in 27 states and we're just getting started.”

This initiative harnessed the work of 40 ICE offices and more than 84 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. This operation employed 384 ICE agents and officers, 247 state and local officers and 92 agents from the DEA, ATF and FBI.

Some of the gang members arrested in this operation include:

- On July 20 in Chicago ICE agents assisted by Chicago and Hanover Park police arrested Ramon Martinez-Valencia who is a high-ranking enforcer of “Sureños-13.” His position in the gang was to carry out the gang’s violent acts against its enemies. Martinez-Valencia had felony weapons and violence convictions and was previously deported from the United States in June 2003 only to illegally return.
- On July 19 in the San Diego area ICE agents assisted by the Oceanside Police arrested Jesus Carrillo, who has previous convictions for causing bodily harm and sex with a minor under three years of age.

The arrests during the past two weeks are the latest enforcement action under Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative intended to disrupt, dismantle, and assist in the criminal prosecution of violent gangs by employing the full range of authorities available to ICE.

ICE uses its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting gang-related narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of illegally derived assets.

Operation Community Shield involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or deport individual gang members.

Operation Community Shield also has an important foreign component, coordinating efforts through ICE’s Attaché offices abroad, particularly with those governments that are also experiencing gang problems. To date, ICE has participated in several anti-gang law enforcement summits and conferences throughout Central America to better coordinate anti-gang related efforts.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield was MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. In February, ICE kicked off the initiative with agents in six major U.S. cities conducting a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of 103 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents throughout the country joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions.

In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of this second phase, ICE’s Operation Community Shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation’s communities.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities